Preschool–Grade 6

# The Baptism of Jesus

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

**Main point:** Jesus, the Son of God, obeyed God and did everything that was right, even though He never sinned. God showed everyone who Jesus is. We can follow Jesus' example and obey God.
**Bible passage:** Matthew 3:13–17. Read it before class, and read John 1:29–34 too.
**Memory verse:** "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." *Matthew 3:17 (KJV)*
**You need:** a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
**Before class:** write the memory verse on the board.

## 1. Opening game: Who Am I? (5–10 minutes)

Read one clue at a time. Kids raise a hand when they think they know the answer. The person is John the Baptist. 1) I lived in the wilderness. 2) My clothes were made of camel's hair, with a leather belt. 3) I ate locusts and wild honey. 4) I told people to repent. 5) I baptized people in the Jordan River. (Matthew 3:1–6) Ask: *Which clue gave it away?* Say: "John baptized many people. But one day Someone came to the river who made John say that he needed to be baptized by Him!"

## 2. Bible story: God Shows Who Jesus Is (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Matthew 3. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

**John at the river.** John the Baptist preached in the wilderness, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:1–2). To **repent** means to turn away from sin; **at hand** means very near. People came from Jerusalem, Judaea and all the land around the Jordan, and John baptized them in the Jordan River, **confessing their sins**, telling God the wrong things they had done (3:5–6). John said that someone mightier than he was coming after him (3:11).

**Jesus comes. Look up Matthew 3:13.** (**Cometh** means comes.) Jesus was about thirty years old (Luke 3:23). **Look up Matthew 3:14.** (**Forbad** means tried to stop him; **thee** means you; **comest thou** means do you come.) John knew Jesus was greater, and he felt that he needed to be baptized by Jesus instead.

**"Fulfil all righteousness." Look up Matthew 3:15.** (**Suffer it to be so now** means let it happen now; **becometh us** means is right for us; **fulfil all righteousness** means do everything that is right in God's eyes; **he suffered him** means John let Him.) Jesus never sinned (1 Peter 2:22), so He had no sins to confess. He was baptized because He obeyed God in everything, and He left us an example to follow (1 Peter 2:21).


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**Out of the water. Look up Matthew 3:16.** (**Straightway** means right away; **lo** means look; **lighting upon him** means landing on Him.) Luke adds that Jesus was praying, and that the Holy Ghost came down "in a bodily shape like a dove" (Luke 3:21–22).

**The voice. Look up Matthew 3:17.** (**Beloved** means dearly loved; **well pleased** means very happy with.) Jesus had not preached a sermon or done a miracle yet; His first miracle came later, at Cana (John 2:11). God was pleased with His Son.

**God's sign for John. Look up John 1:33.** God had told John to watch for the Spirit coming down and staying on someone: that was the One. **Look up John 1:34.** (**Bare record** means told everyone what he saw.) John saw the sign, and he told everyone, "This is the Son of God." The day after, John pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (1:29).

**One God.** Write on the board: *Deuteronomy 6:4* and *1 Timothy 3:16*. There is one God, and Jesus is "God manifest in the flesh," God who came to earth as a man. God fills heaven and earth (Jeremiah 23:24), so the voice from heaven and the dove were signs God gave, so John and the people could know who Jesus is.

## 3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

**Thinking questions** (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. John tried to stop Jesus (3:14). Why do you think John felt that way?
2. Jesus never sinned, but He was baptized "to fulfil all righteousness" (3:15). What does that teach us about obeying God, even when we think we don't need to?
3. God gave John a sign so he would know who Jesus was (John 1:33). Why was it important for John to know for sure?
4. God said He was well pleased with Jesus (3:17). What kinds of things please God in your life?
5. After he saw the sign, John told everyone about Jesus (John 1:34). Who can you tell about Jesus this week?

**Recall questions**

1. Where did Jesus come from to be baptized? *(Galilee, Matthew 3:13)*
2. What did Jesus do right away after He was baptized? *(He went up out of the water, 3:16)*
3. What did John call Jesus the next day? *(The Lamb of God, John 1:29)*


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## 4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **lo** means look, **beloved** means dearly loved, and **well pleased** means very happy with. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

## 5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jesus obeyed God all the way, and God was well pleased. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
*Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.*
**This week:** do what is right even when no one makes you, the way Jesus did. Each day, find one way to obey God that pleases Him.

## 6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Matthew 3:4: What did John eat? *(Locusts and wild honey)*
2. Matthew 3:6: What did people do while John baptized them? *(Confessed their sins)*
3. Mark 1:9: What town did Jesus come from? *(Nazareth of Galilee)*
4. Matthew 3:14: What did John say to Jesus? *("I have need to be baptized of thee")*
5. Luke 3:21: What was Jesus doing when the heaven was opened? *(Praying)*
6. Luke 3:23: About how old was Jesus? *(About thirty years old)*
7. John 1:29: What did John call Jesus? *(The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world)*
8. John 1:34: What did John say he saw and told everyone? *(That this is the Son of God)*


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Or choose the **Baptism of Jesus word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/baptism-of-jesus-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/baptism-of-jesus-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/baptism-of-jesus-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/baptism-of-jesus-worksheet).

## 7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus and showing us who He is. Help us obey You all the way and do what is right, like Jesus did. Help us tell others about Jesus, like John did. In Jesus' name, amen."

**If a child asks, "If Jesus is God, who spoke from heaven?":** keep it short and simple, from the Bible. There is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). God fills heaven and earth (Jeremiah 23:24), so He can speak from heaven and be in Jesus at the same time: "God was in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:19). The voice and the dove were signs, so John and the people could know who Jesus is (John 1:33–34). Never put down another church.
**If a child asks why Jesus is called the Son of God:** the angel told Mary that the Holy Ghost would come upon her, "therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16).
**If a child asks if John's baptism is the same as ours:** say only what the Bible says. John preached "the baptism of repentance," telling people to believe on the One coming after him, Jesus (Mark 1:4; Acts 19:4). After Jesus rose again, Peter preached, "be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). When Paul met people who had only John's baptism, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5).


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